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TAJIKISTAN

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PRESS RELEASE

In December 2008 Mercy Corps launched the USAID Food Support Program in Sughd Oblast to help 3,500 of the most vulnerable families in the Asht district city of Taboshar and Khujand during the winter when household resources are the most scarce. Target households are facing food insecurity due to losses from the severe winter of 2007-2008, food price increases, and limited family income.

The program is made possible with the support of American People through USAID and implementing partner Mercy Corps in corporation with Local district governments, Jamoats and Village Development Committees- Mercy Corps organized meetings in the target areas with local officials and Mahalla Committees to discuss and identify the neediest people meeting set program criteria. Mahalla Committee or in other words Village Development Committee (VDC) is a small community based organization established at village level and consisting of 7-8 members, including the village leader, religious representatives, and other village residents belonging to different professions and social groups. The main tasks and obligations of the VDC are to assist in promotion of village social and economical improvement activities and initiatives. The food aid – wheat flour, vegetable oil, and lentils – will be distributed to vulnerable households in selected pilot districts as well as in Khujand. Mercy Corps also will conduct a health campaign on nutrition and hygiene to selected vulnerable households. The first consignment of 700 metric tons of wheat flour and 175 MT of lentils recently reached Mercy Corps' warehouse in Khujand on its way to project beneficiaries.

-«We all know that Tajikistan is in very poor economic condition, the majority of the country's population is living under the poverty line. But, there is a special group of people who need emergency aid. The (USAID) Food Support Program is a really big help for poor people. During my years of working here, we have many cases when people, having no other way, come up to us to ask for help, but our opportunities are limited. It is really painful (hard) to see those women with many children and weak old people who need help urgently. For many years there is good cooperation between Mercy Corps and the local government of Asht district. With the support of Mahalla councils (committees) and Mercy Corps staff the list of aid recipients has been developed to ease the process of distribution and enable transparency of program activities», notes Mahkamova D., Deputy Chairman of Asht district.

«USAID Food Aid Program» – five month program, started activities from December 2008 in Sughd region. The Program is one of the many assistance projects implemented in Tajikistan by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on behalf of the American people. Since 1993 the American people through USAID have provided about \$300 million in assistance programs that support economic growth, democratic institutions, health care, and education systems of Tajikistan.

The program goal is to address the immediate food needs for the affected children and families in Sughd Oblast

Program implementation ««USAID Food Support Program»» implemented by partnering International Agencies and local governments.

- *International, nongovernmental, noncommercial organization Mercy Corps Tajikistan. Mercy Corps works amid disasters, conflicts, chronic poverty and instability to unleash the potential of people who can win against nearly impossible odds. Since 1979, Mercy Corps has provided \$1.5 billion in assistance to people in 106 nations.*
- *Local district governments, Jamoats and Village Development Committees*

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